



MINUTES

BOARD OF EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS

November 16, 2016 at 2:30 P.M. in City Hall, Rm. 303

Present:

Commissioner Jeffery Roman, Chair
Commissioner Marquette Baylor
Commissioner Mayhoua Moua
Commissioner Aldira Aldape
Sharon Robinson, Dept. of Administration
Jessica Langill, Dept. of Administration

Absent: Commissioner Chez Ordonez

Guests/Members of the public present:

Ben Roovers, City Attorney's Office
Patricia Ruiz-Cantu, Dept. of Administration
Steve Mahan, Community Development Grants Administration
Oscar Tovar, Mayor's Office
Becky Rabatin, Dept. of Administration
Tony Snell, Milwaukee Pride

The meeting was called to order at 2:37 p.m. by Commissioner Roman.

1. Approval of minutes from October 19, 2016 meeting

Commissioner Roman asked if there were any additions or modifications to the minutes; no feedback from the Commission. Commissioner Moua moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Baylor seconded. With no objections from the Commission, the minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Equal Rights Specialist Role

Ms. Robinson talked about the new Equal Rights Specialist role and advised the Commissioners that future projects and products can be completed by Ms. Langill, lightening the Commissions work load. Ms. Robinson stated Ms. Langill would also assist with coordinating community events and the ERC's participation in them. She also asked the Commissioners to run any project/work requests past her before requesting Ms. Langill to complete them. Commissioner Aldape asked if Ms. Langill would be completing research and forwarding relevant news articles/information to the Commissioners, and Ms. Langill stated she would.

3. Marketing Materials

Ms. Robinson stated that there was still funding in the budget to purchase marketing materials such as pens and brochures. She stated that the presentation from Ben Roovers would help make it clear if the ERC was ready to produce marketing materials. Ms. Langill presented the contact card drafts from the graphic designer and asked the Commissioners to look at them and vote for the best one. Ms. Ruiz-Cantu handed out the ACLU's Know Your Rights card as an additional reference. Ms. Langill asked the Commissioners if they would like to change their logo and they all agreed they would like to keep the current logo. Commissioner Baylor asked about the cost of the card and Ms. Langill stated there would not be much of a cost difference between color and black & white cards. The Commissioners stated they would like to find something to put on the back of the card. Ms. Robinson talked about the current ERC brochure and stated it needed to be cut down in length and be clearer, based on what the ERC has the authority to do.

4. Chapter 109 Ordinance Discussion: Ben Roovers (Assistant City Attorney)

Mr. Roovers stated that this Ordinance is slightly confusing because it is not clear about exactly who is protected under it (only City Employees or all people living/working in the City of Milwaukee). He stated this needed to be clarified and amended. Mr. Roovers explained that the Commission must be staffed by 7 members appointed by the Mayor (3-year term) who must be residents of the city, representing a cross-section of the city. Mr. Tovar stated that Commissioners may serve past their term until a Mayor appoints someone else to take their place or re-appoints them for another term. Mr. Tovar stated he would like to re-appoint all of the current Commissioners. Mr. Roovers stated that the current Chapter 109 Ordinance was also not overly clear about the actual powers of the ERC. He stated the Commissioners did have the ability to hear complaints from citizens of Milwaukee and help both parties come to an agreement through mediation, but that the ERC did not have much power beyond that. Mr. Roovers stated that according to the Ordinance the ERC did not have jurisdiction over any protected class that would be within the purview of any state or federal agency, which would leave only gender identity and expression for the ERC to potentially cover under this Ordinance. Mr. Roovers stated that the ERC could consider amending the Ordinance to become a quasi-judicial body, allowing it to have more jurisdiction and have the ability to hear complaints and issue rulings concerning all protected classes (similar to Madison's Equal Opportunities Commission). Mr. Roovers stated that the Ordinance would need to be amended to include the process of receiving and handling complaints. He also stated that there would need to be a much bigger staff to cover the taking of complaints. Ms. Robinson stated that this information should be used when planning for 2017 and stated that a main priority should be to amend the Ordinance to clarify the powers of the ERC. Commissioner Roman stated the ERC needed to start thinking more long-term and really look into the needs of residents in the future. Commissioner Baylor agreed that it was time to start thinking forward to the next 10 years and project that into amending the current Ordinance. Mr. Roovers said it would be up to the Commissioners to come up with a plan on what the role of the ERC would be in the future.

Commissioner Roman stated that the ERC could start focusing more on monitoring city departments and programs, taking 4 meetings a year to hear about what is happening with programs like CDBG, HUD, etc. Mr. Mahan stated that with the addition of the Equal Rights Specialist it would be much easier for the ERC to keep an eye on what is going on with city departments and programs. Mr. Mahan also talked about the regional Fair Housing Plan that the ERC could stay privy to as it is worked on over the next two years. Commissioner Roman brought up Milwaukee Promise and stated the ERC could use it as a framework in creating the ERC's long-term Strategic Plan. Commissioner Baylor stated that the ERC needed to work on really hashing out what the ERC would be focusing on, with direction from the Mayor and information from the upcoming census. Discussion about a 2017 action plan/list of priorities and a long-term strategic plan ensued. Commissioner Baylor stated it would be important for a full Commission to be available to start working on the action plan.

5. New Commissioners/Re-appointments: Oscar Tovar (Mayor's Office)

Mr. Tovar stated that he had just submitted Tony Snell (Milwaukee Pride) and Sheila Ashley to the Mayor for appointment to the 2 vacant spots on the ERC. Ms. Robinson stated that Ms. Ashley is retired from HUD and also has a military background. She stated she was very knowledgeable about housing law and police reform. Mr. Tovar stated the Mayor approved both nominees and they would be submitted for approval by the Common Council in the December cycle. Mr. Tovar stated he would also like to re-appoint the current Commissioners in the same cycle if the Commissioners accept. Commissioners Baylor and Roman brought up the concern that there was not a Commissioner that represented the Disability or Native American communities. Ms. Robinson stated that we could start getting more outside people to come to the ERC meetings that could fill those voids. Ms. Rabatin echoed the need for someone with Disability experience being on the ERC since the ERC may become involved with ADA/ABA needs in the future. Commissioner Roman asked if there was any way to add 2 more Commissioners to the ERC in order to be more inclusive of communities not represented on the board. Commissioner Aldape requested that the Commission be intentional about re-defining each of their roles and make it clear to the public which communities each of the Commissioners represent (make it part of the Commissioner's bio on the ERC website). Ms. Robinson stated that Ms. Ashley would be willing to step back from joining the ERC if another candidate (from the disability or Native communities) would be a better fit. Ms. Robinson asked Mr. Tovar to find out from the Mayor's office if they would approve adding more Commissioners to the ERC. Mr. Snell stated that he had previously served on the South Carolina Handicapped and Disabled Association so he would be willing to advocate on behalf of the Disability Community when he becomes part of the ERC.

6. ADA Discussion: Becky Rabatin (ADA Coordinator)

Ms. Rabatin stated that her position (ADA Coordinator) became required by the City of Milwaukee in response to the ADA settlement agreement with the US Department of Justice. She stated she has been working on meeting the settlement agreement deadlines and working

on reviewing all policies, procedures, and services that the city provides to the public. She stated that the city has also been working on making changes and updates to the city's infrastructure to be more accessible. Ms. Rabatin stated that under the city's current grievance procedure, if a citizen does not like the response they get back from Ms. Rabatin, it would be escalated to Ms. Langill and the ERC for review. She stated grievances about private spaces would go to the EEOC and Department of Justice. Ms. Rabatin stated that as part of the settlement agreement the city must work with a web accessibility consultant to verify that every page of any city website is accessible to deaf, hard-of-hearing, and vision impaired citizens. Ms. Rabatin stated that there would need to be a statement on any ERC publications stating that if citizens needed it in a larger print that they could make a request for one. Commissioner Baylor suggested that we put Ms. Rabatin's contact information on the back of our contact card.

7. Train the Trainer/ACLU Partnership: Patricia Ruiz-Cantu

Ms. Ruiz-Cantu stated that many people are afraid of the repercussions after the recent presidential election and what the city of Milwaukee is going to do in regards to immigration. Ms. Ruiz-Cantu said she had talked to the ACLU about their "Train the Trainer" program in which the ACLU will provide information on rights to community leaders who will then be able to pass that information along to the people they work with on a daily basis. Commissioner Roman suggested that CDBG's Community Organizers be trained as well. Ms. Ruiz-Cantu talked about the ACLU's Know Your Rights card. Discussion about the appropriate resources that should be listed on the card ensued. The Commissioners suggested the ACLU add the NAACP, the Wisconsin Senators, USICS, Paul Ryan, the House Hotline, and Catholic Charities to the Know Your Rights card. Commissioner Roman asked if the card could also have websites listed for further information. Ms. Ruiz-Cantu stated that the ACLU is currently working on updating their current Know Your Rights card and she said she would pass on the advice about resources from the Commission. Commissioner Aldape also talked about the importance of educating people on how to document grievances before filing complaints. Ms. Ruiz-Cantu stated that Emilio from ACLU is willing to partner with the city of Milwaukee and the ERC on the Train the Trainer and other community education initiatives. Ms. Ruiz-Cantu asked the ERC to sponsor the Train the Trainer initiative, the Town Hall, and future trainings with the ACLU. The Commission agreed that this would be possible. Ms. Ruiz-Cantu also let the Commission know that it was in the works to try to make the city of Milwaukee a Sanctuary City. Commissioner Aldape mentioned that she had reached out to the Director of LULAC stating that she would reach out to any public school Administrators that did not properly address bullying resulting from the recent presidential election. Ms. Ruiz-Cantu stated she would keep the ERC in the loop about when the trainings will occur.

8. Office of African American Affairs

Commissioner Roman stated that there was no need to discuss this agenda item since the Budget Amendment had been voted down. Ms. Robinson stated there were still things being discussed regarding the OAAA but that she would keep the Commissioners updated.

9. Human Rights Day & Events for ERC Website Calendar

Ms. Langill reminded the Commission that they had discussed putting on an event for Human Rights Day (December 10th). Commissioner Aldape stated that since the Mayor's office already does something for Human Rights Day that the ERC should just try to get involved with that instead of doing their own event. Ms. Langill stated that she would find out if anything is going on at City Hall for Human Rights Day and if the ERC would be able to take part.

10. Discuss/Reschedule ERC 2017 Strategic Planning Meeting

Commissioner Roman stated that the ERC would use the next meeting (December 21st) to talk about the goals and priorities for 2017. Ms. Robinson suggested that the budget committee come to the ERC meeting and present for the first 20 minutes in order to guide the ERC's planning for 2017.

11. Next Meeting is December 21, 2016 at 2:30pm

12. Community Dialogue

Mr. Snell stated that on November 17th at 7:00pm there would be an event for Transgender Day of Remembrance at UWM Great Hall. He asked the Commissioners to spread the word and Ms. Langill stated she would send the FB event link to all the Commissioners to share with their networks. Commissioner Moua stated that the Greater Milwaukee Foundation was holding a listening session about a recent study they had done on Racial Equity and Inclusion. The meeting would be held on Friday at 1pm. She stated she would send information along to the Commissioners. She also stated that the Hmong New Year celebration would be taking place December 3rd and 4th at the State Fair grounds.

13. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

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jml